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SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR S/ES-O AND NEA/ELA
NSC STAFF FOR SINGH

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [EG](#)

SUBJECT: EGYPT PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS - NOV 9 ROUND -
SITREP #1

REF: A. CAIRO 8501

[1](#)B. CAIRO 8392

[1](#)C. CAIRO 8274

[1](#)D. CAIRO 8112

Sensitive but Unclassified. Please protect accordingly.

[1](#)1. (SBU) Appearing on State TV on the evening of November 8, President Mubarak urged citizens to exercise their right to vote, characterizing it as a "national duty." On the morning of November 9, polls opened at 8 AM in eight of Egypt's 26 governorates. According to Embassy teams deployed in five governorates, turnout as of midday has been generally light in urban areas but significantly heavier in rural areas. There have been scattered reports of domestic election monitors encountering difficulties in accessing polling stations. Emboff witnessed an incident at a polling station in rural Giza in which a group of domestic observers were roughed up by a much larger group of thugs, of uncertain affiliation. Some more detailed snapshots from the field are presented below.

Snapshots from the Field

[1](#)2. (SBU) Polls in the Central Cairo Qasr al-Nile constituency, where the Embassy is located, were relatively quiet in the mid-morning with more campaign workers than voters in attendance at around 9:30 AM local time. At two of the stations, large banners hung promoting Muslim Brotherhood candidates running as independents and with the slogan, "Islam is the Solution." The banners dwarfed the smaller NDP banners. MB workers stood outside wearing t-shirts with the candidate's image. There were multiple posters for NDP and independent candidates. Of note are the paraphernalia that are liberally distributed to voters and observers alike.

[1](#)3. (SBU) (Note: The Qasr Al Nil district, where the U.S. Embassy is located, features an interesting three-way race between the ruling party nominee Hossam Badrawy, a strong reform advocate and associate of Gamal Mubarak, and independent (NDP) candidate Hisham Mustafa Khalil, and Muslim Brotherhood candidate Gamal Abdel Salam. Khalil is rumored to be the NDP's "true choice" even though Badrawy is the official party nominee. Badrawy's defeat would likely be interpreted as a setback for the NDP's reform camp. End note.)

[1](#)4. (SBU) Menoufiya Governorate (in the Nile Delta northwest of Cairo) -- Embassy observers reported a high voter turnout before 10 AM local time. Active campaigning is in force with car megaphones and print materials abounding. Large numbers of banners are strewn everywhere, even along small dirt roads. MB banners are prevalent. There is a large presence of riot police) 10 large trucks and officers in full riot gear although there has been no sign of unrest. At least one candidate's banner has been sighted using the forbidden term of 'General' as a professional title, Ali Shawky Miqlud. Poloff received a call from a local observer from the NCME, National Campaign for Monitoring Elections in the town of Betanoun who noted that voters are using ink pads rather than dipping their thumbs in the required ink.

[1](#)5. (SBU) In Qawaz, a rural constituency in Giza province, emboff witnessed a group of 30-50 thugs, of uncertain identity, attack a group of domestic observers attempting to access a polling station. The observers were violently jostled and shoved, emboff did not stay to witness the outcome - an observer affiliated with the group told emboff just before this incident that he had been roughed up at another

[1](#)6. (SBU) Zeitoun Constituency -- Embassy observers reported heavy voter turnout from Zeitoun, (35 KM north of Beni Suef). The obvious front runner is Zakaria Azmy (the President's Chief of Staff). Some Muslim Brotherhood banners were also hung on the wall of the polling station. At the station, 10 transparent ballot boxes were in use and voters were dipping

their thumbs in ink. Security was low key.

17. (SBU) Shubra, in the northern suburbs of Cairo) Embassy observer reported low turnout, orderly scenes at polling stations, and a heavy presence of MB campaign workers several of whom described themselves as "monitors" affiliated with the MB,s "Sawasiya Center for Human Rights." Banners from ruling NDP candidates coexisted with multiple banners from various opposition candidates, including MB candidates. At one Shubra polling site, MB "monitors" told us the station had no ink. The MB "monitors" went out and bought their own at a stationary store and supplied it to the electoral officials inside, where it was being used. They noted they were unsure how to make the ink "phosphorescent" in conformity with national election standards.

Press Guidance

18. (SBU) As polling stations will still be open in Egypt at the time of the noon press briefing, we recommend any official remarks on the elections be brief, possibly along the following lines:

Begin text

Egypt's parliamentary elections, which opened today, are another step on Egypt's path toward democratic reform. President Mubarak has encouraged the Egyptian people to increase their participation in public life, as an essential step toward a fully democratic Egypt. We support this goal. We have been following closely today's voting, and we will continue to do so during the two subsequent rounds and any runoffs.

End text.

RICCIARDONE